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ABSTRACT

The results of several studies are discussed, initially to indicate that most students are not involved politically and do not perceive their problems as necessarily political in origin. The characteristics of those who do become active in campus political protests are listed, as well as the types of protest activities in which these students are likely to participate, and the types in which they have participated. From the evidence, it is concluded that most student protesters remain within the limits of the law. The scope of the paper also includes those who do not remain within the legal limits. The authors concern themselves with one dimension of the problem, namely, the relationship between liberalism-conservatism and law-abidingness. The study upon which the paper was based examined a specific hypothesis: conservatives given their greater propensity toward reigidity and conformity, are likely to be more law-abiding than liberals. Two instruments were used to collect data from the sample of 128 students at a California state college: (1) Lentz's Conservatism-Radicalism (C-R) Opinionnaire; and (2) Gregory's Law-Abidingness Scale. The results clearly indicated that attitudes of conservative and liberal students toward the law were not significantly different. The correlates of law-abidingness and law violation are discussed. (TL)

LAW-ABIDINGNESS AMONG CONSERVATIVE AND LIBERAL STUDENTS

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Of the many political phenomena which have competed for public attention in recent years, the upsurge of student protest, particularly on college and university campuses, must surely rank among the few most significant. This increase in student political activity has led to widespread concern among the American people. Indeed, it is the opinion of many persons that American college campuses have become bastions of dissent and of outright subversion, and that students (not to mention their professors) have become bent upon the destruction of the political, legal, and educational institutions of the country.

It is not the authors' purpose to engage in polemics. But it is increasingly clear that statements suggesting that American college students have become political hordes willing to involve themselves in any issue which has as its focus opposition to the status quo are grossly inaccurate. Indeed, the simple fact is--all the news headlines implying the contrary notwithstanding--that only a relatively small percentage of students are in any way active politically, and that the percentage of students who engage in what might be termed politically-motivated violence is very much smaller still (see, for example, Peterson, 1966; Heist, 1965; Trent and Medsker, 1967; and Trent and Craise, 1967). The reality of student political involvement is well summarized by Trent and Craise who have observed (1967) "...that most of them had a kind of uncritical acceptance of, and contentment with, the status quo not unlike that of the 'silent generation' of the past."

Moreover, Kruschke, in his study of California students (1966), found, for example, that although most students are "very interested" or "somewhat interested" in politics on all levels, and that although most students feel that the activities of the national government have "great effect" or "some effect" on their day-to-day life, they have, nevertheless, not often attempted to influence a government decision (See Table 1).

Table 1

Extent to Which Students Have
Attempted to Influence a Government Decision*

Frequency of Attempt	Percentage of Students Making Attempt (N=528)
Often	6.4%
Few Times	44.8
Never	44.3

*Percentages do not equal 100 because the "Not Ascertained" have been excluded.

In this same study, Kruschke also found that students, when asked to rank a series of important problems facing the young people of this country, placed relatively little emphasis on the political. The most frequently cited problems, in order of their importance, were as follows: spiritual and moral betterment (25.4%); eliminating inequality and injustice (20.9%); foreign affairs, national defense (9.2%); getting married and raising a family (9.0%); and finding a good job (8.8%). Some 14.8% felt they "didn't know" what the most important problem facing the country was, and hence they could not respond; only 5% felt government control and regulation were the most important problems; and only 0.5% felt that student-faculty relations and campus problems were most important.

Thus it has been well established that most students are not involved politically and that most students do not perceive their problems as necessarily political in origin. But who, then, are the activists? What are the characteristics of those who do become active in political protest on the campus? Again, the evidence on this point is clear. Studies concerned with this dimension of student activism have shown that the activists generally have the following characteristics: middle- or upper-middle-class origins; parents who were relatively permissive, liberal, and democratic; intellectual orientation and above-average academic achievement; curiosity, impulsiveness, unconventionality; and humanitarianism. Such

students tend also to be "altruistic," to some extent "alienated," and to some extent "anxious"; to be relatively non-authoritarian and autonomous; to be disproportionately from Jewish backgrounds or to be irreligious; to be "romantic," "egalitarian," "anti-institutional," and "anti-dogmatic"; to be urban in residential origin; and to be present on the campuses of the "better" American colleges and universities (for an excellent statement on the characteristics of student activists, see Flacks, 1967).

The types of protest activity students indicate they are <u>likely</u> to engage in, and the types of protest activity students indicate they <u>have</u> engaged in, are also of interest at this point. Kruschke, in his 1966 study, made a special effort to probe these areas of student involvement. Item 5 of the questionnaire asked students: "Suppose the government made a law or policy with which you firmly disagreed. In which of the following activities would you be inclined to participate to express your personal disapproval of the government's action?" Responses are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

Activities in Which Student
Would Be <u>Inclined</u> to Participate in Order
to Express Disapproval of Government Policy*

Type of Activity	Percentage of Students Inclined to Participate in the Activity (N=528)
Sign a Petition	74.8%
Work as Individual, with Friends	67.0
Work through Formal, Legal Groups	59.0
Attend a Meeting to Protest	55.3
Work as Individual with Government Officials	52.0
Contribute Money	38.8
Work through Informal, Unorganized Groups	24.0
Walk Quietly in a Parade	23.8
Work as Individual with Mass Media	21.9
Carry a Sign in a Parade	19.3
Distribute Handbills on a Street Corner	16.0
Consult a Lawyer	13.0
Give a Speech in Public to Protest	11.1
March in a Non-permitted Protest Demonstration	9.6
Refuse to Obey the Law and Urge Others to do Same	5.8
Allow Self to be Arrested and Go to Jail	5.4
Sit Down in the Middle of the Street	3.4
Do Absolutely Nothing	2.0
Engage in a Violent Protest	1.1
<u>Sacrifice Own Life</u>	.5

*Total percentage exceeds 100 because students could give more than one answer.

Later in the study, students were asked: "Suppose the government had made a law or policy with which you firmly disagreed. In which of the following activities have you actually participated to express your disapproval of the government's action?" Responses are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3

Activities in Which Student
Has Actually Participated in Order
to Express Disapproval of Government Policy*

Type of Activity	Percentage of Students Who Have Actually Participated in the Activity (N=528)
Worked as Individual with Friends	58.7%
Signed a Petition	47.5
Attended a Protest Meeting	26.5
Worked as Individual with Government Officials	24.6
Contributed Money	23.1
Worked through Formal, Legal Groups	22.5
Did Nothing at All	18.6
Worked through Informal, Unorganized Groups	15.3
Walked Quietly in a Parade	11.9
Worked as Individual with Mass Media	9.6
Carried a Sign in a Parade	6.6
Marched in a Non-permitted Demonstration	4.3
Distributed Handbills on a Street Corner	3.9
Consulted a Lawyer	3.4
Gave a Speech in Public to Protest	2.6
Refused to Obey the Law and Urged Others to do Same	1.5
Engaged in a Violent Demonstration	.5
Sat Down in the Middle of the Street	.3
Allowed Self to be Arrested and Went to Jail	.1

*Total percentage exceeds 100 because students could give more than one answer.

From this evidence, one can assert that not only are most students likely to engage in protest activities which are clearly within the established legal boundaries, but that when students participate in protest activities, most of them in fact do remain well within the limits of the law.

Yet, what about those who do exceed the legally permissible modes of protest? What are their characteristics? The concern of the authors at this point is to examine one dimension of this problem, namely, the relationship, if any, between liberalism-conservatism on the one hand and law-abidingness on the other.

That there has been an increasing interest in research relating to various differences between conservatives and liberals is well known. Spaeth (1969) found that among whites who had attended college, six in ten liberals were sympathetic to campus protesters, while only three in ten conservatives supported college rebels. Forbes and Gipson (1969) concluded that predominantly politically "left" statements are endorsed significantly more by Negro students than by white students. Lipset (1960) believes that one's democratic or extremist political orientation is greatly affected by his personality and that individuals holding extremist-anti-democratic positions tend to exhibit greater authoritarianism than those with moderate-democratic orientations. Levinson (1968, p. 23) observed that "...measure of internationalism, religious liberalism, civil libertarianism, and advocacy of governmental welfare functions will be positively intercorrelated to form a more inclusive syndrome of over-all socio-political liberalism." While many studies have pointed out that authoritarianism is more characteristic of the "right" than of the "left," Rokeach (1960) asserted that high dogmatism is not correlated with either group per se but rather with the extremist faction in both groups.

The social responsibility of liberals and conservatives was explored among other things by McClosky (1958). He found that 47 per cent of the liberals have high social responsibility as contrasted with 23 per cent of the moderate conservatives and eight per cent of the extreme conservatives.

But despite the abundance of literature on the conservative-liberal dimension of political ideology, little has been done to probe the differences between conservatives and liberals in their attitudes toward the law. Indeed, one of the issues of continuing interest to social scientists, educators, government officials and citizens in a free society is that concerning the future of democratic politica

institutions. The survival of democratic political institutions depends to a considerable extent upon the willingness of the citizenry to obey the laws and rules which make democratic life possible for all. The topic of law-abidingness has thus taken on particular significance in the United States in recent years in view of the many protest demonstrations against government policy and the apparently increased alienation of a substantial number of young Americans from the country's political institutions. All of this, moreover, is frequently expressed in terms of a controversy between liberals and conservatives--those who, allegedly, are respectively more inclined to disobey the law and those more inclined to obey it. In other words, it is asserted by some that liberals tend to be less law-abiding than conservatives.

The present study was designed to examine this issue. Specifically, the following hypothesis was tested: Conservatives given their greater propensity toward rigidity and conformity, are likely to be more law abiding than liberals.

A sample of 128 students at a relatively large state college in California was selected. The students were enrolled in four college classes, two in Political Science and two in Teacher Education. These classes were arbitrarily selected from each of these two fields of study. The students, mostly sophomores and juniors with a few seniors, were predominantly white, from middle-class backgrounds, and were almost equally divided in terms of sex--65 males and 63 females.

Two instruments were used to collect the data. First, conservative and liberal students were identified by use of the "Conservatism-Radicalism (C-R) Opinionnaire," an early ideological scale developed by Lentz (Shaw and Wright, 1967). Form K of this scale, consisting of 60 items, was used, with minor modifications and deletions to update a few of the items. Statements in the scale are drawn from such diverse fields as ethics, international affairs, sex and marriage, freedom of speech, education, religion, race relations, and others. The scale utilizes "opposition to change" as the definition of conservatism, and "belief in, or expectation of change" as the definition of radicalism--a definition which is

used in this paper to denote liberalism. The use of "liberalism" in lieu of "radicalism" becomes paramount here because radicals can increasingly be identified on the left as well as on the right, whereas a decade or two ago, radicalism was a term used almost exclusively to refer to the left.

The respondent to the C-R scale is given one point for each conservative statement with which he agrees and one point for each liberal statement with which he disagrees, plus one-half of the number of items omitted. Thus, the higher the score the more conservative the respondent.

The second instrument used in this study is the Law-Abidingness Scale by Gregory (Shaw and Wright, 1967). This Thurston-type scale consists of 14 items requiring the respondent to state how frequently and to what degree he has conformed to certain laws. Three scores can be obtained. The first two, one for the frequency of conformity to law and the other for the extent of law violation, are each calculated by determining the median of scores derived from specific items. The third score is that of law-abidingness which is secured by computing the mean between the total frequency and the total extent scores. The higher the score, the greater the law-abidingness.

Scores were tabulated on the C-R Scale and respondents failing in each categor were then examined in terms of their scores on the Law-Abidingness Scale. Tests of significance and correlation were applied to the data.

The following results were obtained:

1. There was no significant correlation ($r = .20$) between conservatism-liberalism on the one hand and law-abidingness on the other.

2. Differences between conservatives and liberals in law-abidingness were also not significant ($t = 1.19$). Similarly, there were no significant differences between them in the frequency of law conformity and extent of law violation.

3. Significant differences in political ideology were found ($t = 3.71$, $P < .001$) between conservative and liberal students.

4. Political science students were significantly ($P < .01$) more liberal than students enrolled in professional education courses.

5. No significant differences between male and female students in conservatism-liberalism were obtained. Women had a slight but not significant edge in law-abidingness.

Thus the results of the study clearly indicate that the attitudes of conservative and liberal students toward the law are not significantly different. What, then, are the correlates of law-abidingness and law violation?

Through several discussion sessions with college students, and based on field studies, it is postulated that when an unresolved conflict occurs between X value (say a strong position on U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war), which is more highl espoused by an individual than obedience to Y law (say disturbing the peace by demonstrating), the individual, whether conservative or liberal, is likely to disobey the law in order to safeguard his higher value. Conforming to a given law, then, is largely influenced by how strongly an individual is committed to an idea or action which is in conflict with that law. Applying such a postulate in interpreting current student protest and disorder, attention must be focused on the need for analyzing realistically the nature and hierarchy of values and convictions held by today's youth, and to understand the conflicts between their values and the existing norms of the social order instead of merely dismissing student protest as being "radical."

The lack of significant differences in conservatism-liberalism and in law-abidingness between male and female students is consistent with the ever-decreasing gap between sanctioned male and female behaviors especially on the college and university campuses.

The difference in conservatism-liberalism between political science and professional education students reflects possibly the differences in political orientations of professors in political science and in education as well as the fact that students who gravitate to the fields of social science differ in the first place on the liberalism-conservatism dimension. The evidence on the topic of professorial influence upon their students is at best mixed. But it is well

known, as Spaulding and Turner (1968) point out, that the majority of political science professors are Democrats (74% in their study) while only a minority of professors in such fields as engineering are Democrats (27% in their study). It is also commonly observed that professors in socially-oriented fields tend to be more liberal than professors in vocationally-oriented fields such as teacher education. Moreover, it has been found (Trent and Craise, 1967) that education majors consistently rank lower on measures of intellectual disposition; that they are, in fact, among the more anti-intellectual and authoritarian of students; that they have little interest in education for the sake of knowledge; and that they are more interested in the security of their jobs than in teaching, per se. Hence they are more rigid, more likely to conform, and to be, by definition, more conservative.

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